

POSTSCRIPT. July 1950.

(preface which appeared in the two previous)

~~In this new volume of songs by Ivor Gurney nothing requires alteration in the Preface~~ ^{to} here reprinted, ~~which appeared in~~ ^{as it applies equally well} ~~the two earlier volumes;~~ but there are several things to add.

First, warm thanks are due to the poets, their legal representatives and publishers for generously permitting their poems to appear with Gurney's music in this volume which, like the earlier ones, is a tribute to his memory - a memorial such as he himself would have preferred above all others.

Then, truest gratitude and thanks must be recorded to Dr. Herbert Howells and Mr. Gerald Finzi for their invaluable help in preparing the songs for printing. Theirs was indeed the lion's share in the difficult task of making Gurney's highly individual 'lay-out' and notation readily readable without ~~sacrificing~~ his individuality or the characteristic look of his pages. Where any editing has been done it has been confined to the minimum; only just enough has been added in the way of phrasing and expression marks to secure the clarity of Gurney's intentions. In fact the same principles have been followed as in the earlier volumes.

But even with the most faithful and careful editing it was often impossible to convey by musical signs all Gurney's own ways when performing his ~~songs~~ songs. Moreover, during the years when he could have recorded his songs he was,

unfortunately, too little known for the gramophone companies to wish to record them, so there is no help to be found in that direction. It therefore seemed to me that some supplementary notes might be useful; they have been written from the first-hand recollections of Dr. Herbert Howells and myself, to one or other of whom Gurney so often sang and played his songs.

For singers and accompanists alike the general approach to Gurney's songs should be much the same as that to Schubert's Lieder, for though Gurney's work is essentially English, and owes more than a little to Folk-Song and to Parry, the musical foundation of his technique was that of the classical

Viennese school of composers, *whose music he had studied deeply before he became a pupil of Stanford's at the Royal College of Music.*

Gurney's melodic lines are often long, and always important. They carry the poem as naturally as a river carries a boat. He always thought in terms of lovely voices and wrote for them; ^{thus} ~~his~~ his songs demand beauty of tone as well as beautiful diction. His apprehension of words was *extremely* sensitive and his ~~word-setting~~ ^{of them} ~~so exquisite in its perfection~~ ^{adjusted to their values} that singers will generally find his songs are "put over" best by keeping to his written note-values without attempting to make "effects" by pulling about the ^{rhythms and} ~~values and rhythms~~. But there is one important exception. Where ~~dotted notes occur~~ ^{followed by a} ~~essentially the rhythmic~~ ~~that~~ of a dotted quaver ~~and semi-~~ quaver occurs, *♩.7*, the dotted note must be made rather longer

and the short note rather shorter than their face-value, exactly as they ought to be performed in the classical Viennese style. (For the history of this important tradition see Chapter III in "The Interpretation of Music of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries" by Arnold Dolmetsch.)

Gurney himself when singing kept remarkably closely to his own written rhythms, and his word-cum-note values are rich in their expressiveness. He never used a melisma *or other* ornament without its having some special meaning in relation to the words, and his melismatic passages, which are in the direct line of descent from those of Beethoven, Wagner, and Parry, should always be sung very beautifully and not treated in a perfunctory or apologetic style. Another thing to remember is that Gurney kept the life of a song unbroken from start to finish: even when there were rests or silent bars his mental tension never flagged. Yet there was never any rigidity. Indeed rigidity and dry tone are entirely out of keeping with Gurney's own playing, and must never be applied to his songs. This is of the utmost importance. He himself used both pedals at the same time very freely. The piano accompaniments, as played by him, were often a lovely wash of sound ~~which~~ *forming* the background to the voice. The effect cannot well be written out - it was too spontaneous - but it must always be borne in mind, and discreetly employed. Slick clarity in accompanying his songs is the last and worst failure.

~~There was a very real relationship~~ **Between Gurney's**
~~there was a very real relationship~~ pianistic technique and his manner of performance. His
 playing was dominated by the composer's creative vision: he
 had no interest in virtuosity as such, though when he
 wanted a special effect he did not hesitate to write and to
 play a difficult accompaniment. ~~The~~ **The** relation of colour
 to the central idea and mood of a poem was a prime law for
 Gurney. Therefore his songs need from the accompanist
 who plays them an almost creative sympathy with the thought
 of ^{the} man who was in two senses creative - a poet as well as
 a composer.

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